

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the Abstract with the following amended paragraph:

**Abstract**

A new and useful barrier device for a [fluid] utility system cover is provided. [A preferred version of the] The barrier device [comprises a one piece cap structure] is designed to be coupled to a [fluid] utility system cover (e.g. a water meter cover), in a way that effectively seals the opening in the cover against ingress of dirt, debris, animals, etc. Moreover, the [present invention provides a] barrier device [that, in its preferred form,] also provides a structure that enables a hook like tool to engage and manipulate the coupled barrier device and cover, while maintaining the barrier against ingress of dirt, debris, animals, etc. The [one piece] barrier device includes a hood with a border [configured to] that at least partially flattens against a [fluid] utility system cover as the [one piece structure] barrier device is [being] coupled to the [fluid] utility system cover, so that the border of the hood and the [fluid] utility system cover combine to form a barrier to materials and objects near the border of the hood. A stem [is formed in one piece with] extends from the hood, and is pressed into the [fluid] utility system cover, in a way that effectively couples the barrier device with the cover. For covers that are too thick for the one piece cap structure, extender structure is provided, to extend the thickness of the cover(s) to which the barrier structure can be coupled. [In its preferred form, the one-piece structure includes a recess designed for engagement by a tool, to enable a coupled barrier device and cover to be manipulated by the tool.]